

Website launched to help people make informed palliative care decisions

An Internet resource has been developed to provide reliable palliative care information to the estimated 100,000 Australians who each year face a life threatening progressive illness.

The CareSearch palliative care knowledge network website – www.caresearch.com.au – was officially launched in Canberra today (26 May) by the Federal Minister for the Ageing, The Hon. Justine Elliot MP.

The launch coincided with the opening day of Palliative Care Week, which highlights Australia's increasing need for palliative care in an ageing population, and the growing demand for quality care choices for people with a life threatening illness, their families and communities.

Created by Flinders University with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, the CareSearch website is developed and information evaluated by multi-disciplinary health professionals.

“Palliative care addresses physical symptoms, such as pain, as well as helping with emotional, spiritual, cultural and social needs,” said Associate Professor Peter Martin, Chair of the CareSearch project management group.

“People with a life threatening illness, their carers and families need to know more about what is happening to them, and how services work, so they can ask questions and make more informed decisions,” he said.

“The CareSearch website offers free, quality, evidence-based information on palliative care with sections specifically designed for patients, carers, families and health professionals.

“It also provides links to services, organisations, journal articles and documents about symptoms and diseases, patient care and management.

“The CareSearch website is designed to empower people by helping them to make good, balanced choices based on trustworthy information.

“The objective of palliative care is to provide the best quality of life for people living with a life threatening illness.”

Palliative Care Australia President, Professor Margaret O'Connor, said the launch of the CareSearch website underlined the importance of the Palliative Care Week theme of *A Matter of Life and Death* while seeking to foster more discussion in the community about the reality of death.

"We know there are strong links between access to information and access to quality care," Professor O'Connor said. "Being able to make choices about all aspects of life – including physical, emotional, social and cultural issues – determines a person's quality of life.

"There are new realities in end-of-life care and, while the majority of people die in hospitals, up to 70 per cent of them would prefer to die in their own homes.

"It is essential to have access to reliable, evidence-based information to help patients, their families, carers and health professionals to provide quality care at the end of life across a broad spectrum of care settings.

"Palliative Care Australia is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life.

"We congratulate the people behind the development of the CareSearch website and anticipate the information featured will make an important contribution to all our endeavours."

Interview:

Associate Professor Peter Martin is available for interview on 0407 857 589

Professor Margaret O'Connor is available for interview on 0417 372 331

Further information:

Trevor Gill on 0418 821948